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CHAPTER I.

My travels in the Gran Chaco.

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In October 1911 I arrived in Buenos Aires by an English steamer, proceeding directly from London, and a few days later continued my journey by railway to my future field of research. The Argentine government, to which I was introduced by the Russian minister in Buenos Aires, Count Maximoff, did everything to facilitate my undertaking and even offered me an escort on my journey to the Indians — an offer which however I was obliged courteously to decline. My nearest goal was the sugar factory of Esperanza, situated about three miles from the small town San Pedro in the province of Jujuy in northern Argentine. At this factory thousands of Indian labourers are employed to cut the sugar cane in the fields surrounding the village. Among these native labourers almost all Chaco tribes are represented — especially the Tobas, the Mataco and the Choroti — and there are instances of Indians arriving from the interior parts of the country where no white man has yet put his foot. Here I had an excellent opportunity of making preliminary acquaintance with the Indian tribes whom I proposed to visit later on in their own land.

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I was received with great kindness and hospitality by the owners of the sugar factory, the great English firm Leach Brothers, who helped me to get into contact with the Indians. At Esperanza I stayed for three weeks, making preparations for my expedition into the Chaco, so that it was not until in the middle of November that I could set out upon my journey. From San Pedro de Jujuy it is only a few hours railway journey to Embarcación, which at that time was the last station towards the north. From there on one could only travel on mule-back along the road which from Embarcación goes to southern Bolivia. Messrs. Leach had helped me to buy the mules at Esperanza and also got two peons to accompany me at least on the first part of my expedition.

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